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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

WOOD CARVING, ADAPTED FOR BOTH THE AMATEUR AND THE PROFESSIONAL.

By W. N. BROWN,

Author of "Wood Turning for Amateurs," "Working in Brass," "The Arch, Vault and Dome," "The Ancient Ecclesiastical Wood Work of England," "The History of Decorative Art," "A Manual of Wood Engraving," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.—ON BOOKSLIDES, FRET CUTTING, ETC.



IN my last I said I would treat of the carving of bookslides, touching in passing upon fret cutting as an auxiliary to the work of the wood carver proper. I now hasten to keep my promise, and I do this the more for the reason that, seeing the title, objects and scope of this journal, I think it advisable and appropriate to embrace within the scope of this series as many objects as possible, which, while serving as a recreation of an artistic, historical and interesting description, will also serve to add to those things of utility, and at the same time beauty, which one always looks for in a refined, comfortable and well finished home. Hence I shall now proceed to deal briefly with the manipulation of a small bookslide, such as are to be found on most boudoir or parlor tables, and which are always useful no matter how humble or aristocratic their resting place. This book slide or "rack," as some prefer to term them, will look more than passing well if executed in mahogany, walnut or oak, and particularly in the last named wood, which is really the most adapted for all descriptions of library fittings. For preference it should be left unvarnished, should be half an inch, or even a little less, in thickness, and about six inches will be sufficient for the width, while the height will necessarily vary according to the description of books it is intended to use in the slide.

In commencing this work plane the two end pieces after they have been cut off, and carefully trim up perfectly square the edges. The design must then be accurately drawn upon each, and it would be well if a somewhat bold design were selected, though it must not be too large, or it will look and really be out of place. The picture drawn, the outlines of the design must be stabbed out as usual, a sharp chisel, not too large, for the straight lines, and a gouge for the curves being employed, the tool being held quite upright, and pressed evenly downwards to a depth of about one sixteenth of an inch. If the tool is as sharp as it should be, and the pressure fairly forcible, there should not be the least difficulty in effecting this "stabbing" out, as it is termed, neatly and quickly, and the amateur particularly should not fall into the common and totally unnecessary habit of calling in the aid of the mallet upon any and every occasion—still less the hammer, as I have seen novices do. The

Fig. 46.

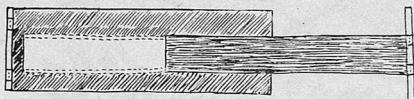


Fig. 48.—Bottom Board.

palm of the hand can do very much in the way of wood carving, and its use should be cultivated. When stabbing, particularly for the outlines, make the tool cut just *outside* of the drawn line, and for this reason, that a guide for working by is preserved, and the proper proportions can be preserved, while any little inaccuracies can be detected and rectified before too much of the wood has been removed or any of the lines of the design are split. These "wrinkles" may seem to many superfluous, especially to past masters in the art, but to the young beginner or student they will not be so, as it is more often than not that in these little details our lads fail to get instructed, and then they wonder that their work is so often unsatisfactory. Most carpenters can use a chisel, but it is not all carpenters who can sharpen one, yet to be a thoroughly good workman he should be able to do both. The comparison is obvious. Presuming that the stabbing has been successfully and neatly accomplished, hold the tool in a slanting direction towards the lines stabbed in, and with the hand if possible, if not with a light touch with the mallet, actuate it till a slanting cut is made. In wood carving do not be too anxious to remove a lot of wood at one time, as this is apt to cause fractures and cause portions to come away which might be required for the working out of the designs.

Beginners are far too apt to knock out "chunks" in their anxiety to get through the job quickly. If removed carefully and in small portions at a time, the superfluous wood will be cleanly and evenly cut away, and if properly done a small channel will be left, one side, or wall of which will be vertical and the other oblique, as shown at Fig. 46 herewith, which is, of course, an enlarged sketch to make my meaning the clearer. The reason for cutting in this manner will be obvious, as it leaves the way perfectly free of loose wood and gives plenty of room for the workman to manipulate his tools in. Another matter to be borne in mind by the carver is that the grain of the wood should be noted, and the work carried out in accordance with the direction in which it runs. The channels for the design having been cut, the superfluous "timber" can be removed generally with a small gouge, evenly, and taking care to have the ground, or "mat," left perfectly level and smooth, but this last must not be obtained by rubbing down with sand paper or similar means. This done, the edges of the design must next be gone carefully over with the tool, and stabbed out neatly and evenly, the oblique cuttings being made last, and finally the superfluous intervening wood cut away until the depression of the ground is, speaking averagely, about a quarter of an inch

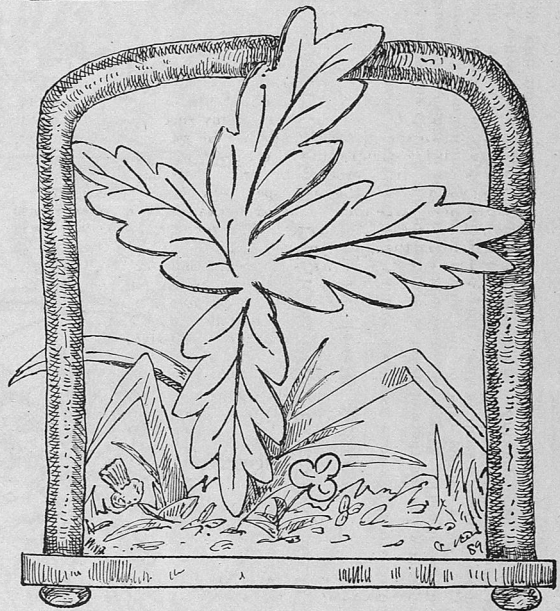


Fig. 47.—End of Book Slide.

deeper than the design in its most prominent portions. Of course it will occur to the artist that the whole of the design cannot naturally, and must not conventionally have one uniform dull level, hence the leaves, sprays, buds, fruit, flowers, or whatever it may be, supposing the design to have been taken from plant life—than which there is none better—must be raised or depressed—in high or in low relief—according to the nature of the subject selected and the taste, skill and powers of execution of the carver. For this reason the design should be drawn at least, if not worked from supplementarily, from the actual natural plants, and if the carver will only do this systematically he will find that he will gain very much in artistic and botanical knowledge. The design having now in the main been cut out, the bolder portions being finished, the finer details must be carefully rounded and trimmed up—such as the stems, leaves, etc.—and the veinings marked, when the result should be satisfactory. If preferred the ground can be gone over with a punch, but where Dame Nature supplies the *motif* I prefer the ground being left exactly as from the gouge, as being far more in unison with the design. At Fig. 47 I give a rough sketch of one of the ends for a book slide, the details of which can be amplified or modified according to individual fancy, while the one selected will serve as the basis for many, and hence obviate unnecessary recapitulation. Of course the hole for the hand can be cut out with a bow saw, but it can also be carved out, which, though the more legitimate method, is certainly by far the more tedious, and in fact is seldom adopted. I prefer it being cut out with the gouge and chisel. I would also advise it being done first, as then the design, should it not quite harmonize, can be altered in accordance therewith, which would be an impossibility after it had been cut out. Equally these slides can be made without

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a hand hole at each end, and I have one such, made in English oak, in my possession at the present time. The ends done, they can, if preferred rigid, be screwed on to the bottom board, which preferably should be of the same wood, with small brass screws, but I recommend and prefer a sliding bottom, with the ends hinged on, as then the rack can be made to hold any reasonable number of books, besides being more portable when out of use, as it will fold up. A sketch of the bottom of one of these book slides will show the carver what I mean and how to make it, the edges of the one piece either running along a concave channel or along a piece of wood, termed a "runner," whichever the workman may select and find the easier. Below is the sketch at Fig. 48. When a sliding bottom is adopted it will be advisable for the wood to be rather stout, and decidedly well seasoned before being made up. In all the preceding samples I have given what is known as "relief," or solid work, namely, that which is executed on one side of the wood only, but in some of the best ancient examples, as in some of the finest work of modern days, some very beautiful and effective designs are produced by what is known as "pierced" work, which, though largely fret saw work, is really a portion of wood carving, and can therefore legitimately be included in this series. In this branch of art, when the operator has acquired a sufficient proficiency, he will be able to let his fancy run wild in some very effective renaissance designs, for which a well deserved predilection is springing up, particularly for public establishments. As my chapter has a convenient break here, I shall, after giving a few necessary notes relating to the book slide end selected for the present lesson, bring this chapter to a conclusion, reserving my pierced and fret cutting work for my succeeding instalment. Having drawn the design and got all in readiness for carving, the board being clamped down so that it will not be injured on to the work bench, proceed by first of all cutting away the superfluous wood for the open spaces—in this instance eight altogether—four large around the oak leaves and four smaller ones among the rushes at the bottom. Then cut out the four large leaves, veining them and in fact virtually finishing them, next proceeding with the rushes, shamrock, thistle, etc., at the foot, filling in this portion almost at fancy. When this is all done, proceed with the external frame, which must be kept rounded and roughed with rough and irregular lines, so that it represents a log, thus preserving the continuity of the design, which should be natural. I have placed small button feet on the sketch (Fig. 47), but these can be dispensed with if preferred. I think the working out of this will keep my students fairly employed for a month.

THE SOFA.

BY M. F. HARMAN.



IN the drawing-room the tiny sofas are piled with down pillows in their gay coverings until there seems very little space left for a seat. It is a luxurious fashion, and they are very ornamental objects indeed, but it is not of these I wish to speak, but of the sitting-room and bedroom sofa, which in many houses is often a neglected piece of furniture. It exists, for no one thinks a sitting-room furnished without a lounge of some sort, but it is often entirely devoid of pillows or rugs, and does not, in Winter time especially, invite to comfortable repose. There is no excuse for going without pillows now, when they may be bought covered for \$3 apiece. People living in the country who keep chickens may have any number of them by saving the nice soft chicken feathers, curing them perfectly and putting them in a case of unbleached muslin; ticking is too stiff and hard. A friend gave me one which she made in this way, and it is almost as light as the down pillows. The gay silks for coverings are very cheap now, and a colored pongee is sold as low as fifty cents a yard. If these are made with rosettes of the same sewed into the corners, a pretty pillow will be the result.

The French satins and cretonnes are very much the rage now for sofa pillows, and they are very beautiful with their gay flowers strewn over a light ground, and are an almost exact imitation of the old satins and brocades of a century ago. They range in price all the way from 75 cents to \$2.50 a yard, and are quite wide.

Perhaps on some bed in the house there is an uncased pillow, or one so tightly stuffed that it can spare some of its feathers with profit; however the feathers are secured, if some young girl who happens to read this wishes to give her mother a handsome and useful present, let her set about making a sofa pillow. It must be generous in size, twenty-one inches square, or even larger, and, if the former size, it should weigh about one and three-quarter pounds (1½ lbs.) The unbleached muslin for the case should first be washed to remove any possible stiffness.

A pretty way to finish a silk cushion is to sew a ruffle of the same (rather full) in with the seam all round. This ruffle should

be made of a strip of the silk about six inches wide, doubled to avoid having a hem. Moss trimming is still used as a finish for pillows, and narrow ribbon to match the silk is often pleated on one edge and sewed in with the seam.

To protect pillows that are to be used (and none ought to be too fine for use) covers of washable material are made with eyelet holes at the sides, and these are laced together to hold them in place. For the size I have mentioned a strip of cretonne about fourteen inches wide would answer. This goes around the entire pillow, and is laced with cords ending in tassels. A pillow of twilled turkey red is handsome, covered on the upper side with a netting of coarse white cord, and any one who understands hammock netting could make one very quickly.

I like the kind of fancy work that does not take long to make, that produces good and beneficent results without too much labor, and I have no patience with people who waste precious time embroidering the plush abominations in tidies, table covers and sofa pillows which used to be so popular. Fortunately we are learning that they have no artistic merit, and the rage for them is passed.

But our sofa must have a rug or afghan of some sort, and I want to tell how a friend of mine secured a very pretty one at a trifling expense. She collected all the worsted she could find in the house, some of it in the form of shawls and tidies which had long been discarded as too shabby for use, and after raveling everything that was good enough for the purpose, she wound it in the form of hanks, thick and thin together, tied them securely and washed them. After that she dyed them black, and they came out an excellent color. To go with this she bought some scarlet Germantown, wound and doubled it; the dyed worsted also had to be doubled, as much of it was too thin to use in any other way, and with a large bone hook she crocheted her rug in the pretty star stitch. It is all in one piece, five black stripes and four red ones, and a deep fringe of black on the red stripes and of red on the black one completes it. It is about two yards long without the fringe, and one yard and eleven inches wide inclusive of a shell border on each side. Each stripe consists of five rows, and these are crocheted rather loosely, and, the worsted being double and the hook large, the work went rapidly and pleasantly. If one has no worsted, common yarn would do if the scarlet were a good shade. A different stitch might be used, or if knitting came more easily to the worker, I don't doubt it would look well done in plain garter stitch.

If I could not have a sofa rug in any other way I would have a blanket dyed a handsome scarlet, bind it top and bottom with black velvet ribbon (or button hole it with coarse black worsted), and use that for the purpose.

Ever since I read in the papers several years ago of the death of a prominent man in New York from pneumonia, caused by falling asleep in a cold room without any covering over him, I have felt the importance of having a rug or afghan on the outside of every bed, and on every sofa where one is likely to be needed.

A NEW style of decoration intended to apply to wall paper, curtains, and which may include upholstery coverings, has just been matured and brought out by a firm of manufacturers of wall paper hangings. The feature of novelty is the providing given patterns of cretonne for rooms for upholstery purposes, and laying on the walls of such rooms, assumed to be sleeping apartments, paper of corresponding patterns. It cannot be said that the repetition of a design in this manner in different materials would not have a somewhat piquant and unique effect, but with the novelty wearing off, the question is would there not be found too much of duplication. There is a reasonable love of variety which the scheme, to some extent, respects and correct taste would seem naturally to suggest a background to a room different in colors and figures from objects in the foreground. The plan would relegate to neglect a host of wall paper patterns suitable for their purpose. There is much grace and beauty in many of the designs for cretonne, a certain joyous freedom in the fanciful convolutions of stems and the lively coloring of flowers; they admit, too, of lights and shades and a variety of hues, but in successful adaptation to wall paper various modifications are required and not bare imitation. Cretonnes may be made to serve on the basis of excellent designs in wall paper, but let them be accompanied by contrastive hangings in self color or embroidered for bed and window curtains. Why, if this idea of duplication prevails, there is nothing to prevent wall paper manufacturers possessed of more enthusiasm than artistic taste aiming to gratify the public by duplicating carpet patterns in wall paper, and infringing on the business of carpet jobbers by providing carpets to match.

A PLEASING moulding for the cornice of a dining-room is in the form of a grill, with alternate *fleur de lis* and roses at the points of intersection.